



THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

PROCESSED

AUG 01 1996

GTU LIBRARY

Volume 23, Number 2

Summer 1996

ISSN 0263 - 0907



THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Sōtō Zen). It is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and is located in Mt. Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

PATRONESS &

FIRST FOUNDER:

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C.

TRUSTEES:

Rev. Jishō Perry, M.O.B.C.

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.

Rev. Saidō Kennaway, M.O.B.C.

ABBOT:

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.

THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is published quarterly and costs £8 per annum. Opinions expressed in the articles are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abbot, Throssel Hole Priory or the editor.

THE JOURNAL OF THE ORDER OF BUDDHIST CONTEMPLATIVES is published quarterly by the O.B.C., Shasta Abbey, P.O.Box 199, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067. Subscription rates are \$23 surface, \$30 airmail and cheques should be sent to the Editor at the above address.

PLEASE NOTE. We would like to clarify our use of the word 'He' when referring to the 'Eternal,' the 'Cosmic Buddha,' the 'Dharmakaya,' 'Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva' etc. Whenever 'He' is used, understand that what is meant is 'He/She/It.' We simplify our usage in this way so that the continuity of the articles is not repeatedly broken up by the form 'He/She/It,' and also because we have not yet found another word which conveys the complete meaning.

Data Protection Act: If you receive your *Journal* through the post it means that your name and address and subscription details are kept on our computer files. This mailing list is also used by Throssel Hole Priory Bookshop. If you would like to have your name removed please let us know and we will delete it (you will still receive the *Journal*).

Contents

The Birth of the Buddha Rev. Daishin Morgan	2
The Truth of Being Rev. Haryo Young, M.O.B.C.	8
Waves of Samsara Rev. Saidō Kennaway, M.O.B.C.	30
The Voice of Buddha Rev. Alden Fulcher, F.O.B.C.	35
Working with Computer Frustration Rev. Berwyn Watson	38
Reflections on the Ninety-Day Retreat 1996 Cliff Edwards & Wendy LaChance	41
News	45



Editor: Rev. Berwyn Watson
Transcribing: Rev. Phoebe van Woerden
Illustration: Rev. Myfanwy Abbie

Throssel Hole Priory Buddhist Monastery
Carrshield, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 8AL
Tel: 01434 345204

Volume 23, No 2, Summer 1996
Copyright ©1996, Throssel Hole Priory
Printed In England

The Birth of the Buddha

Rev. Daishin Morgan

This article is based on a talk given after the Festival of The Buddha's Birth in 1994

Within the Buddha Nature there are two aspects, the Unborn which is quiescent and That Which Comes Forth from the Unborn, the appearance of the Buddha within this world. These two aspects correspond to wisdom and compassion, both of which are essential to a life lived truly in accord with enlightenment. There is no contradiction between what you might call the born and the unborn when they are understood from the point of view of the mind of meditation. The wisdom, or Unborn aspect, is known in the human heart as the unity that underlies all of existence. When the self is allowed to dissolve and the mind no longer takes refuge in making distinctions between self and other there is that which is totally sufficient and complete. Out of compassion for all living things Buddhas do not remain in Nirvana but appear in the world. Today we celebrate not only the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha but also the arising of compassion, the fact that whenever there is a need, the Buddha Nature always responds. We may ignore that response but that is our loss, and not the fault of the Buddhas. If we do not know the quiescent, the stillness, if we don't have the unmoved, then that which is moved, that which feels and is deeply connected to the suffering of others will be washed away. But when we have both the aspects of stillness and compassion then we have a true refuge within the born, within the changing. The only way of finding this refuge is to seek it above everything else, to seek the Unborn within the born.

In our society we are surrounded by the impression that the only form of compassion that means anything is that which acts. Sometimes we tend to run around too quickly, in a way that shows we are drawn

along by our own delusions rather than by being guided by the Unborn, Undying, Unchanging. We fail to take refuge and so we find our actions driven by unrecognised elements of greed, anger and delusion within ourselves. We need to develop the ability to look at what comes before us without rushing to judgement. It is enough to see. That involves allowing the situation to be as it is, to have complete acceptance that it is as it is. Ready made solutions, theories and opinions have no place here. However heart-breaking the situation may be we need to allow ourselves to contemplate it as it stands. To do this we must let go of every bit of grasping that arises. When threatened, the self wants reassurance which it seeks in fantasy. All fantasies revolve around the delusion that the self is separate and the fantasies serve as supports for that imagined separateness. It is through careful contemplation of the mind that we can verify the truth of this. The fantasies are part of what is, they too have to be accepted. In seeing their nature we no longer want to take refuge in them because we see what comes of doing so. Thus insight gives rise to change. What I mean to get across here is that the movement of compassion, the move to act that is in accord with the Unborn is not separate from the Unborn itself. There is simply that which is to be done. Someone else looking at our action may say it is compassionate, but to us it is simply the next movement of life.

Nothing is separate from the Unborn, whether it is good or evil. We can make the movement of the Unborn into delusion or we can leave it alone, in which case It manifests enlightenment. We turn the movement of the Unborn into delusion through a misperception of the senses. We perceive things as being other than ourselves, we see the world as "out there" while I am "here". Once we feel ourselves separate then we automatically feel vulnerable and grasp after all manner of things in the hope they will protect us. That delusion arises for all of us, but if you sit still within it you can see that it is an illusion, something that appears to be real but is not. You can see this when you do not indulge the grasping but allow yourself to know it. Don't waste time condemning clinging, that will only confuse things further. Just let

it go into the stillness. Getting all ascetic and identifying with abstinence is just another form of self. This is not a license to indulge but a pointer to the fact that there is nowhere for a self to stand that will be right. The only way is to let go, time and again. If we can sit still in the heart of whatever arises we can see that there is not a compulsion attached to it. To be able to see the clinging is to have a choice whether to cling or not. To exercise that choice we must know that our refuge lies within the Unborn and not in any thing. That knowledge comes from meditation, from seeing, time and again, that grasping hurts.

Desire is not necessarily a bad thing, it is one form in which the Life of Buddha manifests. When we don't recognise our fantasies then desire leads us by the nose into suffering. We are not the slaves of our fears and desires but we appear to be when we allow them to rule us. What is needed is to stop and look at the desire itself by asking "Is it good that I do this? Is this in accord with the Buddha Nature, is this something that will take that which comes forth from the Buddha Nature and make it into something that produces greed, hatred or delusion of one kind or another?"

In the ceremony of the Buddha's Birth we ladle water over the Baby Buddha. The water is the Water of Compassion. The Water of Compassion flows, it is one way of expressing that which comes forth from the Unborn. It comes forth without discrimination and flows everywhere, through everyone and over everyone. When we look at what arises within our mind we need to know it is within the Water of Compassion. And it still remains true that we can take that which arises and pervert it, or be guided by it and allow it to manifest enlightenment. The *Lotus Sutra* uses the symbol of a great cloud from which comes a rain that nourishes all the different trees and plants of the world. There is one rain and one soil yet each takes up the water according to its kind. The Water of Compassion does not judge, it flows, and in its flowing delusion is washed away.

Although we talk about Buddha Nature (since it would be very difficult to talk about something without giving it a name), don't be deceived into thinking the Buddha Nature is a thing. That is why we call it the Unborn. If it is born then it dies, therefore it is not eternal. But in saying that it is eternal, we are not saying that it exists in some sense that is graspable, containable or measurable. This is one of the distinctions between Buddhism and most other faiths, in that there is no creator in Buddhism, nothing that stands apart from and acts upon a creation. All is one, and within that unity arises the activity and appearance of difference. The appearance of the born is not a forsaking of the Unborn, it is the Life of the Unborn. The appearance of difference must be recognised and accepted and it must allow the movement of the Water of Compassion. When we are deceived into thinking that the appearance of difference means we are separate, then we are the creators of a world of delusion and suffering. This is the most important issue in Buddhism, to understand the nature of birth and death. It is useless to argue and discuss it, the only way is to put your trust in the meditation and be still.

But what is it that you put your trust in? So often we are fearful of making that leap into trust. We fear that we will commit ourselves to something that may turn out to be inadequate. When you look at what I am asking you to trust there is nothing that you can hold on to. There is nothing in that sense that can let you down. We doubt it sometimes because we don't see clearly. We get immersed in our own suffering and difficulties and are led on a merry dance by them, believing that what we can see of our lives is all there is. This in Buddhist terms is one of the key features of hell. Hell is not a place so much as a state that one can find oneself in at any time or place. Its main feature is that you think that all there is is your present suffering, so you can see nothing beyond it. The suffering therefore seems endless, pointless and intense. The Buddha's purpose in pointing out the Unborn is to encourage us to "look up" or perhaps, "look within", to cease to allow the suffering to pull you around and recognise that within your own heart there is that which is originally pure. If you can

believe, and at the beginning it may be a matter of belief, that there is something more than the closed world of suffering, then you have all you need to meditate properly. Meditation is not some fantastical thing, it is simply to be still and allow yourself to disengage from the process of thought. One thought leads to another, and another and so on, thus creating an inner "reality" which is simply our desires leading us around. Sit still and desire still arises. Sometimes it is good to fulfil that desire, sometimes it is not. How do you know? If you listen to your heart you will know what gives expression to the life of the Unborn and what gives expression to delusion. The Precepts are the essential guide, but to apply them we must listen intently. When delusive thought is abandoned as a refuge and our reference point is the Unborn, then our activity is the movement of compassion. When this is so, as Rev. Master Jiyu says, we will never, as long as we live, do harm - because the Lord of the House will not cause harm as Its very nature is compassion and wisdom.

When you are called upon to trust, know that what it is you trust is not subject to delusion, not subject to failure. We can get it wrong, we can misinterpret and get it backwards but how can we break out of the cycle of suffering if we don't take the risk? If we try and if we at times fail....well I was listening to some talks the Dalai Lama gave. Someone was asking him about all the terrible things that are going on and his response was that you must do the best you can, and if you fail, no regrets. That was something I found very moving because there is enormous faith implied within it. Even if it seems to go wrong then, "no regrets", because what else is there? The alternative is to say it is not worth it and to despair. But if we throw ourselves in and recognise that yes, there can be mistakes, in fact there will be mistakes and the process will get sidetracked sometimes, but so what? We have to refine the capacity with which we look to the Unborn, but in itself It cannot let you down. This is what we celebrate at this festival, the coming of That which embodies the life of the Unborn and by its presence points to the Unborn. The way we train, the way we ring the bell, is what spreads the Dharma, broadcasting that there is something on which we

can rely. We don't have to make that something into an idol, we don't have to make it into an object of our clinging. The Refuge embraces human feelings and it points to the fact that we do not have to be run by human feelings. We must allow ourselves to be directed - not even directed - to just be the expression of the movement of the Life of Buddha. All we need do is not get in the way, in other words to cease from evil. Just stop doing that which obstructs and the flowing of the Buddha is there for us all.

One of the scriptures uses the analogy of a lamp as a way of showing that when you light a lamp in a dark room the darkness vanishes. The lamp does not think of itself, "I am a lamp. I will cause the darkness to vanish, it is through my being that the darkness vanishes." Simply the light is lit and the darkness recedes. All we need is to light the lamp, we don't need to go on and say, "because of what I do I cause the delusion to subside, I cause good to arise and evil to decrease." The key to remember is that it is not "me" who trains, there is no need to create an actor. It is enough that we trust, that we keep making the offering of ourselves for the light will always be there.

*

*

*

The Truth of Being

Rev. Haryo Young, M.O.B.C.

[This article was originally published in the 1996 Spring/Summer issue of the Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives]

I have rewritten parts of this article several times in an attempt to overcome an inability to say what I wish to with both accuracy and economy of words. This present version is a compromise between analysis to the nth degree and the need for succinctness, and I hope that the reader will not fault me for introducing ideas about which much more could be said. Further, while it is my hope that the somewhat general nature of my discussion of certain subjects will stimulate the reader to think for him—or herself, I am quite willing to answer any correspondence which may arise from unresolved questions caused by this approach. In addition, after taking into account the inexactness of words, should you find my views incomplete and, with an eye clearer than mine, you wish to make comment, then I invite you to do so.

*

It is unfortunate that most religions have, to varying degrees, elevated the experience of their founder to a level seemingly beyond the reach of most people. In popular Christianity, Christ is seen as other than human and his relationship to the Truth is, by definition, impossible to be duplicated by mortal man or woman. In Buddhism, the concepts of nirvana and enlightenment are too frequently considered so lofty and unreachable that efforts which lead to their attainment are deferred to “future lifetimes when conditions will be more favorable.” Alternately, deep religious Truth can become unreachable not because we see it beyond our ability to experience, but because we become satisfied with a conceptual understanding of such Truth; or we cling to a partial

experience of the Real as if it were the whole. Both of these positions, unless gone beyond, prevent us from "knowing" fully that which lies beyond the individual mind.

The existence of the Truth presents a great challenge. Once seen, this challenge exerts an inner pressure which, in time, will become painful if unrelieved. If we try to relieve the pressure by distracting our attention with other things, or by covering it up with rationalizations, it is a great pity, for every person is capable of experiencing That which puts to rest the yearnings within us which prompt the great questions of life. Such understanding is the natural outcome of persevering on the road of Truth no matter how dim the light or how great the temptation is to linger by the roadside, satisfied with what we know in our hearts is not the answer we seek. This road could be described as having four stages and may be likened to a literal road which travels through four countries. When one is firmly established in one of these four stages its full character is most clearly realized, just as the undiluted uniqueness of a country is most readily experienced when in that country's heartland. The borders between these stages, however, like the borders of countries, share qualities both of where one has been as well as where one is going. These four stages are (1) ignorant nonduality, (2) dualism, (3) illuminated duality and (4) illuminated nonduality.

Ignorant Nonduality

Ignorant nonduality is the state into which we are born. Our senses soon develop and operate without preconception or calculated self-interest. There is a unity of ourselves with our sense experience and the outside world. These things do not exist separately in our minds, nor does the concept of their unity. The elemental mind and the as yet uncorrupted use of the senses do not produce a dualistic world view, yet the merit of this clear vision goes unappreciated because it is effectively invisible to us. We are like a man born blind who cannot see the darkness that surrounds him since seeing itself has no meaning. Were he to temporarily gain the faculty of sight, the meaning of sight

would then be known to him. Should he then lose his sight again, he could then see the darkness which, although present before, went unseen. Similarly, in the beginning, our original nondualistic mind is unknown to us and has no conscious meaning since meaning itself has no meaning. It is only by mentally creating and entering the realm of meaning, duality, that we can gain the experience which then provides a context in which nonduality can be made meaningful. Both dualistic experience and the inevitable experience of suffering within duality are therefore profoundly important and necessary. One makes the appreciation of enlightenment possible, the other provides the impetus to seek it.

The advancement toward enlightenment, however, should not be seen as an attempt to reclaim some infantile or childhood state of mind. In ignorant nonduality we are passive recipients of the innocence and self-forgetfulness we enjoy simply because the dualistic ego has not yet surfaced and exerted its influence, not because the perspective it creates has been transcended and lost its power and reality. Our calm is the temporary and often uneasy calm *before* the storm and not the tranquil peace which occurs after the storm and its causes have passed.

The Progression toward Duality

It is just a matter of time before we wander across the border between ignorant nonduality and duality and some can even remember when their sense of self becomes “set”. This transformation is not a conscious choice on our part. It cannot be attributed simply to the inexperience or failure of society or parents, although these may be contributory factors. It is a virtually inevitable progression brought about by powerful influences within our human makeup, compounded with the effects of our experience and behavior.

A basic understanding of these forces not only helps to explain how we come to be limited by dualistic thinking, but it gives us important insight into how to break its grip. Knowing how a structure is assembled makes its smooth dismantling more certain, especially

when the strongest joints are frequently assembled in the most subtle and difficult-to-discern manner. Without an appreciation of these subtleties religious practice can become such that it acts on too shallow a level, becoming inflexible or mechanical, becoming tradition for tradition's sake, losing sight of its original purpose, and not addressing the true need of the moment for the individual. When this occurs, one can expend much sincere effort hurling oneself against the edifice of self without making the progress one would hope for.

The forces I will consider in this article are those which have the largest causative effect on the way we are. They are those that are most apparent and uniform from one person to the next and should be distinguished from those influences which are less apparent, highly individual in degree of importance, and subject to interpretation as to their origin and meaning. When and if an awareness of these latter types of causes should arise, such as the sensing of possible past life experience, it is usually wise to discuss them with one's spiritual advisors.

The influences which are the subject of this discussion and which largely account for the appearance of normal dualistic reality are of two categories, unconditioned and conditioned.

The *unconditioned forces* are those which make up the natural, *biological part of our human nature*. They are deeply rooted and instinctual, with the bodily desires being among the most obvious. They stem from the past and predispose us to certain perceptions and actions. Although the effects of the unconditioned forces are many, a strong case could be made that the most remarkable is the role they play in the forming of the perception of ourselves as separate beings. Virtually all living things exhibit some form of a will to live, without which circumstances would have bid them adieu long ago. Even if based on something false or illusory, anything which helps to actualize this will to live tends to be held in favor by nature. For example, some moths have large "eye" spots on their wings to deter predators. Although deceptive and unreal, the natural process is quite willing to use such

untruths if they help a creature survive and propagate. Similarly, the fracturing of an undivided reality into self and that which is not self, a view ultimately limited and untrue in a religious sense, gives a being with such a world view an advantageous degree of sophistication as far as survival is concerned. That this separation is ultimately untrue is secondary to the fact that it works as if it *were* true, and it therefore has a value in being maintained since it provides a frame of reference for more readily recognizing food, danger, enemies, a mate, etc.

As this illusion is honed over the ages, consciousness, which is *fundamentally transcendent*, becomes falsely identified with the body and we perceive a perishable, isolated and individualized body and mind, that is, “my body” and “my mind.” We have become like a dirty jar with a bright light inside. The thicker the encrustation on the sides of the jar the more the light will only illuminate the jar and its content and not that which is outside the jar. If the jar is clear the light is unimpeded and all is illuminated; there is no difference between inside and out—the distinction falls away. That there appears to be a distinction is all but guaranteed because of the power of the inherited unconditioned forces which, when they surface, virtually predetermine we will be “selves” wandering in the opposites of like and dislike, existence and nonexistence, good and bad, etc.

The expression of this wandering is facilitated by the *conditioned forces* which shape us from moment to moment. The conditioned forces are the *effects of experience*, which include the results of our own behavior. They contribute not so much to the appearance of the dualistic mind but more to its strength and changing character. For example, interacting with our inherited general capacity for desire, they compel us to want *certain* things and to devise ways of getting these things. Unlike the relatively inflexible unconditioned forces, which are resistant to change because they are deeply entrenched, the conditioned forces derive their strength from their changeableness and adaptability.

Once these conditioned forces help draw out the latent self into the world of the opposites, they then strengthen both it and the dualistic

world in which it lives by repeatedly activating and gratifying our mechanisms of coarse and subtle desire. The effects of contemplative meditation help break the grip of this inadequate and, in essence, imagined and projected reality. When we refrain from giving the unconditioned and conditioned forces their usual degree of expression, their effects are gradually diminished and the false reality they have created can eventually be known for what it is.

Duality

At this point I would like to briefly discuss the concept of “duality,” which I feel is used too often with the incorrect assumption that the reader has a good idea of what it means. I have used it myself many times in this article, but not without some reservation. Just what is duality and what is wrong with it? Why is having a dualistic mind a problem? What I hope will be understood when I use the term duality is summarized in my answers to these two questions.

The dualistic world (duality) is the world created and lived in by the dualistic mind. It is also called the world of the opposites. The dualistic mind is that mind which perceives anything in a manner that endows what it perceives with an existence (or nonexistence) and separateness (that is, selfhood) from other things similarly perceived. It thereby creates a universe of separate objects, sensations, ideas, people, etc., the individual existence of which it treats as real. Over time, such a view establishes a fixed limit to our understanding and actions. Once the dualistic mind appears out of the background of nonduality, it reinforces itself through self-objectification and usurps the senses for its purposes. It stations itself between us and what we experience and it then acts as an interpreter of experience. We encounter these subjective, conditioned interpretations and mistake them for direct experience. We do not enter into the experience of things as they are, but instead experience things as we think they are. In essence, we experience only our own minds.

The subsequent feeling of being in a universe surrounded by endless other things is "normal" enough, and it certainly *seems* sensible. I want a glass of water; I get a glass, fill it with water: practical proof that the glass and the water exist! I drink it, therefore I exist, and I am certainly not them. However, simply because something makes functional sense does not mean that such an understanding of what is real might not be seen as incomplete from another perspective. There may be another way of viewing things which, until experienced, is inconceivable, or at least seems illogical. I am reminded here of primitive peoples who, when Westerners took photographs of them for the first time, were most distressed because they felt their souls had been captured in the pictures. They simply did not have the experience to see things from another point of view. Keeping this in mind, we should not dismiss as just philosophical speculation the age-old admonition by teachers of all traditions that the common view of the self is faulty. If we cling to the view of a separate self as an ultimate view and use our bodies and minds to reinforce this view, or the companion view that that which is outside of ourselves has only the reality we are able to perceive, then we will never go beyond the world of appearances. We will never transcend our conditioned personal existence and minds. We will never be more than what we think we are.

In contrast to the dualistic mind, the nondualistic mind does not hold that things exist or do not exist. It does not consider whether the self is real or unreal. It does not view things as separate or unified with itself. It does not see itself as a *one* which observes an *other*. The nondualistic mind simply *is*. It is detached from speculation and does not have to assign value to what it perceives. It therefore perceives no-thing. The universe no more exists for the nondualistic mind than it does for the body of one who is dead, or for one who has been rendered unconscious. In fact, one with a nondualistic mind could be described as being simultaneously conscious and unconscious. They are as one who is and is not. In so much as the nondualistic mind can be experienced it could be typified as the conscious absence of subjective experience. The meaning of the above is mystical in nature and I assure

the reader that it is not my intention here to be enigmatic, only straightforward. Nor is it my wish to give the impression in any way that the nondualistic mind is anything other than acutely aware of its surroundings, undistracted, and energetically involved with whatever task might be at hand.

The dualistic mind's view of a separate self and separate others is seldom questioned amidst the day-to-day flow of events in life. These perceptions arise from nature which is, out of necessity, fixated on existence and the avoidance of nonexistence. Enlightenment belongs to a realm wherein the opposites of existence and nonexistence are transcended, therefore the path of the natural self is, in and of itself, limited and cannot lead to enlightenment. It does, however, provide us with a body and mind, which are the means of finding enlightenment once the lessons of life awaken within us the yearning for Truth. But this yearning alone will not bear fruit unless we actively do that which serves to counteract the already mentioned forces acting upon us. To my mind, the decision to undertake this struggle is exemplified quite beautifully in the life of the Buddha when, according to legend, He placed His empty begging bowl in the waters of the River Nerañjarā and stated: "If I am able to find enlightenment, may this bowl float upstream." The bowl's then floating miraculously upstream predicted His eventual enlightenment.

Here the empty bowl represents the meditative mind and the flowing river represents the inertia of worldly desire and duality within and around us. The floating backwards indicates the nature of the resolve necessary to overcome the power of the current trying to sweep us along.

Should we choose to make this resolve our own, we must not start out with a disparaging attitude toward the self. It is fundamentally innocent and if viewed from a distance is seen to be quite remarkable. Although limited, like a train that cannot escape the track on which it runs, it has nonetheless brought us a great distance. It is not an evil to be overcome or annihilated but something to be understood and

converted. At his enlightenment, the Buddha said, O housebuilder, thou art seen (as in seen through) not, O housebuilder, thou art killed. Among other things, a thorough study of ourselves can reveal the underlying reasons for our past or present mistakes, and give us the insight to help us avoid repeating them.

We should also recognize from the beginning that the road ahead will not be an easy one. The utmost will be asked of us which at times will seem unbearable and will require deep inner fortitude. The meaningfulness of traveling the spiritual path must become more sustaining than the feeling of personal happiness which, given the nature of self-denial, will seem far away at times. But if we persist, we will come to know that that which is asked is small in comparison to that which is given. We should remember that only we can do the day in and day out interior work on ourselves that is necessary. Of course we should seek the good advice of others and sincerely follow such good advice even if the advice is difficult or painful to follow; but we shouldn't become overly dependent on others lest we lose sight of the fact that ultimately we are responsible for our own training. No one else can find the Truth for us, nor can anyone else or their opinions prevent us from finding the Truth if we do what truly needs to be done to find it.

A Model of Training

Doing what is necessary to rise above the opposites is greatly aided by having a model of training to refer to. We will frequently need to act in a way that is counter to our natural inclinations and the difficulty of doing this may prompt us to ask: What am I doing and what am I trying to accomplish? Having good answers to these questions that are clear and down-to-earth is very important, especially when the emotional component of what initially motivates us wanes.

The description of training and the fruits thereof which I would like to offer may seem somewhat analytical or not even very "religious" in tone. This is deliberate on my part since in general I have tried to express myself in this article in a way that could be understood by

someone unfamiliar with Buddhism. If we presuppose some underlying Truth which religion can help us find, such a Truth predates any religion that describes It. As this Truth would be nonsectarian, we should be able to speak about It without having to become too esoteric. Being universal, this Truth binds us together with a common denominator which is overwhelming when known. Religious conflicts cannot be about this Truth. At best, they can only be about our interpretation of this Truth. This is because even a genuine understanding of an experience of Truth is but an interpretation of a reflection within the mind. One *dwelling* in Truth has no understanding: he or she *is* the Truth. It is a state of being, not a state of knowing. Explanations which come from knowing cannot transmit the Truth to another, though they do have relative merit provided we remember that ultimately words are incomplete and misleading. They cause us to look in a wrong direction, but hopefully they cause us to look in a direction that is less wrong than where we have been looking.

With this in mind, the main elements of the model of training I find most helpful revolve around changing both the way we use the senses and the way we react to sensory information, and I include the thinking mind and its thoughts in these two categories. These are hardly new ideas, especially as far as Buddhism is concerned, but I hope that my perspective on the subject may prove to be useful to others.

Earlier in this article I referred to the *elemental* aspect of our minds. This elemental mind is the ever-present, underlying nature of what we know as our ordinary individual minds. It has a clarity and reserved quality about it which make it easy for it to be obscured by the other aspects of our mental makeup. It could be compared to a clear lens which has other colored lenses in front of it. Looking at a light through the stack of lenses changes the clear image of the light according to the qualities of the colored lenses. They distort the image which, if seen through the clear lens alone, would be seen simply as it is. The colored lenses in this analogy are comparable to the dualistic ego's world view (of isolated entities) which is the result of the

conditioned and unconditioned influences previously mentioned. The basic senses of sight, hearing, etc., also have an underlying elemental level of "pure" functioning which becomes clouded for the same reasons. When the filters drop away, either gradually or abruptly, their effects cease and our experience of existence is dramatically different. This includes the realization that the meaning and import of the familiar "I" within us is changed as well. If conditions are right and the conversion is deep, then consciousness itself may be physically dislodged from its worldly seat within the body, rise up, and relocate in a new spiritual seat. Practice does not stop at this point, but one has a new perspective on it, to say the least.

These changes, discussed more fully later, can be brought about through many disciplines; however, the one I shall refer to here is the practice of serene reflection meditation coupled with moral preceptual behavior. Serene reflection meditation, which is the same as Sōtō Zen Shikantaza meditation ("just sitting"), has a particular nature which distinguishes it from some other forms of meditation in which, as is commonly presumed when one hears the term meditation, one purposefully thinks about something or deliberately uses the mind in a variety of other ways. In seated serene reflection meditation one does not deliberately think, nor does one deliberately try not to think. There is a gentle but firm attitude of detachment toward the mind and its contents. Both the thought process and sensory impressions are simply let go of when they naturally and inevitably arise, without being pursued, repressed or judged. This effort is, in essence, a bright-minded, voluntary dying to one's entire world of experience. Deceptively simple, the benefits of "merely" refraining from exercising the dualistic mind should not be underestimated. Each time we choose not to let it run its course we weaken it, albeit minutely. Over time it becomes thinner and thinner. The "filters" of illusion become lighter and lighter and the potential for a clearer perception of Reality is greater. By "doing nothing" we in fact do a great deal. In my opinion, it is the single most important act we can do, since it changes us on such a fundamental level and its far-reaching effects facilitate the many other

aspects of our practice. Incidentally, my brief description here should not be seen as a substitute for formal meditation instruction.

The progress we make during seated meditation periods, however, will be diluted if our behavior in our daily lives produces opposing effects. This is why preceptual guidelines are so important. Our daily actions should not crystallize what we are trying to dissolve with our formal meditation. They should be an extension of the basic meditative attitude of detachment into the active aspect of our lives. But we should not worry that this will make us vulnerable and less effective as people. One can and must learn how to maintain a contemplative interior while being clear-thinking, decisive, and responsible. The two do not stand against one another.

A point almost impossible to fully appreciate except in retrospect is the attention we need to pay to even the slightest of our thoughts, words, and deeds. For example, when one is trying to put a “fractured” universe back together an idle negative comment about a “sleazy” politician, or “lousy” restaurant, can be profoundly divisive. Spiritually speaking, the average person is better off cutting off a limb than cultivating the attitudes of mind usually behind such comments. There are, of course, non-polarizing ways of expressing opinions, but it is something of an art learned with experience.

The senses must also be used with great care. If we hunt for experience through the medium of the senses, then we perpetuate dualistic isolation. The union of the opposites will elude us and the unsatisfactoriness of being a separate self trapped in a fleeting moment of time will persist. If we can learn to see without looking, hear without listening, then we can stop the moving out of ourselves caused by desire seeking fulfillment through the innocent sense faculties. Only when the senses are stilled, with their respective objects forgotten, can the glorious quality of things as they are be entered into and the false reality of duality transcended. Only then can the full meaning of duality and delusion be known. Prior to this time, our understanding of duality, delusion, and Truth is incomplete and somewhat nebulous. For the very

reasons that we should not try to approach the Truth intellectually, we should refrain from thinking too much about the nature of delusion and duality. Their nature is as inaccessible to the intellect as is the nature of Truth and their essence is revealed simultaneously with, and as an integral aspect of, the meaning of Truth. Although ultimately they all vanish within nonduality, if one wants to consider them, their meanings should be seen as facets of one understanding and impossible to comprehend separately.

The mind of nonduality is the mind we are, in effect, emulating in the practice of contemplative meditation. This process of emulation can be likened to the way we take a car onto a high-speed freeway. Utilizing the on-ramp we drive in a way that emulates those who are on the main road. In one sense we are doing exactly what they are doing, only in a different place. The more perfect our emulation, the smoother the eventual merging with them. This merging is simply a matter of time if we keep our attention on the road immediately in front of us and not somewhere else. Similarly, the meditative ideal to which we aspire is, in fact, what we are demonstrating each time we meditate. Eventually the ideal *will* be realized, and we will understand how it is contained, even if unseen, in our present efforts. Contemplative meditation is not a means to an end, which when found means we will then meditate differently. Keeping our attention on where we are now, by applying the steady hand of training to the present moment, is the best way to ensure steady forward progress and eventual awakening. Such an awakening will not happen, however, if we allow ourselves to become distracted and end up, not on the main highway, but touring through some attractive piece of countryside on some minor side road. At times we must be ruthless with ourselves in this regard. The self wants to attach itself to things and the process of detachment can be very threatening. It imagines the outcome of detachment to be a horrible, lonely emptiness, but this is not what happens if we keep going through the dark times and do not veer off.

A driving force behind our potential to veer off is our propensity to seek experience. From birth, if not before, we learn about the world around us through a continuous flow of experiences. We experience something such as a hot stove, and thereafter have new knowledge about stove tops, heat, hands and pain. The next time we see the stove top and call up the meaning of its sense impression, it has an added dimension. Experience becomes a prerequisite for knowledge and we become *experience-oriented*, with the process of giving interpretive meaning to sense experience the means by which knowledge is extracted from the basic experience.

This experience-oriented approach will not work for the finding of enlightenment. It will only keep it at a distance. The freedom of enlightenment is not dependent on experience. The experience of Freedom is the experience of freedom *from* experience. Experience *itself* must be transcended. This cannot happen if we look outside or inside for an experience of Truth or continue to give interpretive meaning to what comes in through the senses. This is the reason for the attitude of benign detachment in contemplative meditation. The underlying "meaning" of existence will become clear when it is not being covered up by subjective human meaning. Our senses do not have to be heightened nor does reality need to part, like a curtain, to reveal something hidden. We are staring IT right in the face. There is nowhere we can look where we are not seeing IT. We perceive the Truth at all times but do not "know" the Truth, not because our experience is lacking but because we need to change *how* we experience. The experiencer must change, not our fundamental experience. Your eyes know how to see without your help. Your ears know how to hear, even your mind knows how to think without your assistance. Let go of all that you feel yourself to be, with no reservation. Allow your body and mind to fall away. You won't die. What lives on will be the real you, your True Self, the Master of Masters.

Before moving on to the next section I would like to cover two final points. The first is that the will to train is much more important

than the intellect as far as successful practice is concerned. Without the will to train, the most accurate intellectual understanding of the concepts of training and enlightenment will be of limited benefit. If knowing the Truth was the result of thinking, then a person with a keen intellect would have an advantage, but this is not the case. Generally speaking, the intellect serves to remove obstacles which the intellect itself has created. One can go straight to the Source, and the intellect is most certainly not this Source. In fact, like a physical eye that is pained by too bright a light, the intellect undergoes various agonies when facing the Truth directly and meeting Its incomprehensible aspects. Rejection of the intellect is not the answer, however. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with it and it would be unrealistic to deny the intellectual part of our makeup. We need to study ourselves and learn to distinguish between our using the tool of the intellect in a way that is beneficial versus a way that is harmful.

The second point is that religious development cannot be reduced to a formula which proceeds on a predictable time schedule. People are not like orchard trees, planted in rows, bearing their fruit in unison. We should try to do the best we can day by day with a good-natured patience that outweighs any tendency to become disappointed because our speed *seems* to be too slow. We may in fact be doing all that is being asked of us and we should remember that there is, growing in the dark, an element of personal readiness associated with each one of us that has its own timetable and is beyond at least my capacity to completely understand or predict. If we can just patiently and faithfully apply ourselves with little worry, each one of us, in our own time, will blossom.

Illuminated Duality

Behind our turning toward religion is a desire to find a better direction, or answers to important questions, or a way to become a better person, or it is a response to any of the many other reasons each of us could name. Implicit in any of our reasons is a desire for change.

Yet too few ever realize the magnitude of change that true religion points to. Often people use it to fulfill a particular need, or ease a particular pain and, finding relief, they are not motivated to go further. The relief they find, which no doubt may be genuine, becomes a sort of proof that their use of religion is *the* use of religion. Unarguably, a violin *can* be used as a paperweight, but what a sorrowful waste of beauty if it is never played. Fortunately, there have always been those who have not let us forget that there is more to life than meets the eye. They stir something within us—our discontent, our desire for peace, our tiredness with the endlessness of desire, our sense of, “Is this all there is?” Whatever it is, however you feel it, they make us long to know some tiny light on a far-off horizon.

So, with our imagination stirring our desire for some promised unknown, we say, “Yes, I will go,” and we start the climb. What then lies before us is not the beginning of a new journey, but a continuation of one we have always been on, that everyone is on, only now we are walking a straighter line, and our purpose is hopefully clearer. The work ahead is not accomplished by sincerity alone, though. Whereas the transition from ignorant nonduality to duality is a virtually guaranteed progression, as if down a slippery slope, crossing the boundary between duality and illuminated duality is anything but automatic. There are no escalators here for use by “spiritual” persons, but rather a mountainous stairway that anyone can climb one step after another. If we do the hard work of climbing we will gradually change. As we convert ourselves, if we do what is necessary to remove any of the filters that obscure the Truth, we will perceive Reality in a new light, the clarity of which is in proportion to the decrease in the obscurity, and is experienced in increments that range from being gradual and barely perceptible to abrupt and dramatic. If the depth of our effort is not momentary, but the result of what we have truly become through long-term preceptual behavior, the clarified vision so obtained will not fade because it will be our nature not to do that which will cover it up again. It will, however, after a period of normalization be integrated into our outlook and no longer seem unusual. Depending on the depth

of the understanding, this period of adjustment may take a matter of minutes or a matter of years.

Some people have during the course of their training many memorable religious experiences, while the spiritual life of others is essentially unremarkable. Neither course is inherently superior to the other or necessarily indicative of better training. For example, the experience of past lives, visions, or "supernatural" experiences will arise naturally if there is something we need to learn from them. For some people they may prove to be important, for others they will be peripheral at most. In either case we should remember that these experiences are not, themselves, enlightenment and *can* prove to be obstacles if clung to. The longing for, or cultivation of experience, either worldly or other-worldly, is still worldliness and as such is an impediment for someone striving for the perfection of meditation. No one follows exactly in the footsteps of another, nor do any two people start out from the same place, therefore it is natural that our spiritual histories should vary.

Common to many great religious traditions is a particular transformation that has been called the opening of the third eye, or wisdom eye, or the seeing with a single eye. This unique experience is a sign that a dramatically new perspective has been found that is bound to revolutionize the viewpoint of the person concerned. The nature of this experience defies a satisfactory description. While clearly an anatomical eye is not produced, it is nonetheless more accurate to think of the experience as a literal one than a symbolic one. Although I have attempted in earlier parts of this article to describe in a general way a means by which this pivotal change can be made more likely, I must admit having more feelings of mystery than of understanding when approaching the topic of the transformation itself. Nonetheless, I will say some of what I know on the matter hoping that what I say may be helpful. I would do so anyway if for no other reason than to be corrected if I am in error.

When, through the deliberate effort of relinquishment of experience or through the weight of external or internal circumstances, one comes to achieve a required degree of *correct* detachment, there may occur a physically perceived movement within one's being. Some part of us, as if now unfettered and unrestrained by the weight of even the slightest thought, is felt to rise up, as if floating, from the central part of us and station itself toward the front of the top of the head, or outside of, but in close proximity to, the top of the physical body. As it moves, there is a remarkable general feeling of lightness and a gentle feeling of exhilaration or excitement as its presence and movement are sensed. This experience is the start of a process which may take months or even years to be called "finished," and can result in an overall remaking of the person concerned. What happens after this process has been set in motion will no doubt vary from person to person, and my intention in describing some of the things that can happen is not to suggest it is a complete account, as I am sure it is not. And even if such a thing as a complete or "correct" account existed and I could convey it, I doubt if I would do so, since I would not wish to spoil or influence the uniqueness with which an individual meets and understands such an experience, should they be fortunate enough to approach the Truth through this means.

Sometime after the Rising of the Spirit, as it has been called, one may notice that one is perceiving the world from another place within the body. It is as if one's consciousness, where one feels oneself to be, is now in that place where the spirit newly resides. One sees from this place and not from the worldly eyes. The new "third eye" sees, among other things, the underlying substratum of illumination in all things. And when it sees objects it is as if it is *revealing* them, as if their very existence depended on the seeing. This state of affairs can be most perplexing and requires time to adjust to. The worldly eyes are still used, but it is now this third eye that somehow sees through them, seeing what they could not. They, it would seem, have reverted along with the other senses to an earlier pristine state when their grasping quality was as yet undeveloped. There is a profound stillness of each

sense faculty, an unconditioned quality, which enables an experience of existence that cannot be typified as a usual subject-object relationship. There is a wordless, timeless fusion of all that was separate. Known is the *Sufficiency of No-thingness*, which puts one, finally, at peace. All that has gone before is now but a dream; a long, desperate, largely unconscious struggle within the opposites to find the peace and freedom which are now known to lie *beyond* the opposites.

What had been experienced previously as one's mind may also undergo a change. Transfixed by what it sees, as if gazing forgetfully into eternity itself, it may not respond with its usual willingness. Intellectual functioning may become laborious or even seize up to varying degrees and one may need to make practical arrangements with others to compensate for its temporary lack of ability. Over time its full competent functioning will return, but it will not be the same old mind as before. The individual quality of it will be greatly diminished and distant. It will no longer be entangled with "thinking" in the way it was before. There will also be a deeper appreciation of how subject we are to the power of our thoughts and how hopelessly bound we are until we change our relationship to certain types of thinking.

The previous feeling of "I" may also undergo a dramatic change. No longer bound by bodily and conceptual limits, it can become transcendental, filling all space and time and *be experienced as such*. Consciousness, when depersonalized, becomes the universe experiencing itself, like a mirror appearing in its own reflection. The fear of personal death, and the reality of separate individuals, fall by the wayside. One can never look into the eyes of another and see only what one saw before. The separate self, which has undergone a drastic dismantling process, can, with care, be reconstituted somewhat into a persona and used when and if necessary. Only now it is not in charge. It must conform to our new perspective, not we to its. When functioning, it does not cling to the belief in the existence of others or of the physical world, since so doing would only serve to strengthen its own sense of being in proportion to the intensity of the clinging. The body

is utilized, but one knows it has only a temporary appearance and relative reality. One has a dual nature or, if you like, two bodies: the finite physical body, the human being we see that has personal experience, and the timeless body, the whole of any and all universes, that abides in transcendent serenity. One may imply also a third formless body, or Source, from which the first two spring and to which they return.

Although many other things may be known, and no doubt many others beyond my knowledge, I would next like to mention something of the practical teaching one receives at this time. This teaching makes it clear what one should have been doing in one's practice *all along*. For example, one becomes acutely and immediately aware of the effects of those personal thoughts, words, and actions that are counter to what has been comprehended, or counter to the means by which it has been reached. An error of this sort could be the speaking of an unkind word. Even before it is fully past the lips its destructive effect is felt as it reforms some part of the barrier which separated us from True Life.

The emptiness one enjoys makes the conditioning effects inherent in even our simple daily actions all the more apparent. Even elements of our religious practice, if we have one, may need to be studied to see if the *actual* effect of what we do with our bodies and minds is in accord with its intended purpose. If it is not, we may need to fine-tune either what we do or the attitude of mind with which we do it. No longer can sensory experience, or even the thinking of attractive or compelling ideas, be entered into unmindfully. Through trial and error, one learns that there is no such thing as a small, unimportant pleasure. Even if the roots of personal suffering have been cut through, this condition will fade if we revert to old ways, thinking we are beyond the law of cause and effect. As long as we have bodies and minds which are capable of experiencing that which is pleasurable or unpleasurable, we will have to be vigilant.

It will also become clear, as it probably has been all along, that our enjoyment of the fruits of training is permitted for but a short time, and

that it would violate the very principle that made them possible if we were to try to stay in this place. Moving on, we let go of the subtle burden which some might call enlightenment, and which we have no longing for in any case, as we are little stirred toward experience. We turn again from the known and continue on the road of detachment because even though these Truths which have been revealed are not unreal, until *actualized* they belong to and sustain a subtle plane of duality, illuminated duality, which, although rarefied, will still bind us. However slight, there is still an element of mental separation between us and the Truth.

Illuminated Nonduality

Imagine a king in dreamless sleep. Although not conscious of anything, this does not change the reality of his being a king; he is simply unaware of it. This is comparable to the state of *ignorant nonduality*. Suppose he begins to dream that he is a servant. Again, the reality of his being a king is unchanged but, experiencing his dream as real existence, he thinks he is something he is not. This is comparable to the state of *duality*. Should he wake up, he will then remember with clear certainty that he is a king. He will no longer think he is something he is not. This is comparable to the state of *illuminated duality* when we experience our True Nature. If he gets up and simply executes his duties, without holding onto the idea that he is a king, he will then be a king, by doing what a king does, and not just lying in bed thinking "I am a king." He will have *actualized* what he knew, making it real by his actions. This is the nature of Realization. The knowledge that he is a king may come to mind throughout the day, but he does not cling to it. He does not need to remind himself of what he is to be able to act. By dropping the idea of what he knew he was, he was able to unite with it. This is comparable to the state of *illuminated nonduality*.

There are two forms of Truth, the Truth of understanding and the Truth of Being. The Truth of understanding is our understanding of the Truth of Being. The Truth of understanding is expressed in true



The Northern Regional Priority Project

What is the Northern Priory Project?

The project aims to provide the means to invite a monk to train with us and to act as a regional prior based within the area of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Manchester and Merseyside. As prior, the monk would be asked to offer their training, teaching, support and encouragement to the congregation in the region, and to promote the practice of Serene Reflection Meditation (Soto Zen) here.

We feel that this project is the next step in helping the Sangha to take root in the region. Since Throssel Hole Priory was founded in 1972 it has offered us the opportunity to explore and deepen our Buddhist practice by both joining in the daily schedule of the monastery and through an expanding programme of residential retreats and festivals. As the network of meditation groups has expanded, these have provided additional local support and focus. Now the time feels right to invite a monk to train amongst us, and to work towards providing a permanent local base for the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives in the region. Traditionally such support has been the way in which the Buddhist teaching has spread.

Offering support to enable a monk to train here and our invitation for them to teach the Dharma clearly expresses our wish to bring greater focus into our practice. Their presence, and the example of their training closer to our own daily lives, will provide a still point of refuge and a reminder of our own purpose in training.

With trust much may develop from this root over time. This could include the opportunity to join the monk in his or her practice, and more regular teaching and support both through the network of local meditation groups and also through other regionally organised

Deed Of Covenant

I, (full name)
of

Post Code

hereby covenant that for 4 years (or during my lifetime if shorter)
from today I will pay to Throssel Hole Priory the sum which after
deduction of income tax at basic rate will be £..... a year, (insert
amount of your payment) amount in words

Signed and delivered by me
on (date) in the presence of witness (not spouse)

Witness's signature

Witness's address

Bankers Order Form

To the Manager of Bank,
Branch Address

Sort Code

Please pay to the Co-operative Bank, Grey Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne
(08-90-06) for the credit of Throssel Hole Priory, Account No. 50738610
£..... (amount in words) starting on of
..... 19 and a like sum

* Annually on the same date in each year of the following 3 years making 4
annual payments in all or

* Monthly on the day of each subsequent month for 4 years
making 48 payments in all (*delete where not applicable)

Name

Your account number Date

Signature

*If you have any questions, or would like to know more about ways
to support the Northern Regional Priory Project , please contact
The Bursar, Throssel Hole Priory, Carrshield, HEXHAM,
Northumberland NE47 8AL Telephone: (01434) 345204
Registered Charity Number 506094*

activities such as retreats and talks. A local base will become an important place close at hand to take refuge, and be at the centre of the mandala of the local Sangha.

How and when will the project begin?

This autumn Rev. Alexander Hardcastle O.B.C. will be based in the region for a month, following his practice, visiting groups, giving talks and leading local retreats. We hope that in future years continuing monk visits of this kind can be planned until we are able to support a regional prior on a full time basis.

Initially we will use temporary or rented accommodation, but our plan would be to build up resources both to cover the additional costs of longer visits and in time to provide a permanent local priory. How this might develop would be decided in consultation with Throssel Hole Priory and congregation members in the region.

How can I help?

This project will need regular and sustained effort over a number of years. What we need to do now is to take the first step and find out where that leads us. If you would like to be part of the team actively involved in getting the project off the ground, would like to offer any comments or suggestions about our plans or otherwise offer practical help (for example with temporary accommodation or transport), please contact Iain Robinson at the address below.

Donations towards the project (the fund for which is under the control of and part of the assets of Throssel Hole Priory) would be gratefully received. Cheques should be made payable to **Throssel Hole Priory**, and all donations sent to *The Northern Priory Fund, c/o*

The Bursar, Throssel Hole Priory, Carrshield, HEXHAM, Northumberland, NE47 8AL with a request that the money be allocated to the Northern Priory Project.

One-off donations are very welcome. Because of the on-going nature of the project it is particularly helpful if you can commit yourself to contribute a regular donation. Even if you can afford only a small amount each month (the equivalent of £1 per week through a deed of covenant, described below, would add up to £70 towards the project during a year) it makes a big difference to know that we can count on this. If say 40 people in the region were to do this the total would already cover more than half the anticipated running costs. Larger committed amounts are also welcome.

A Deed of Covenant form is provided with this brochure. Using this enables us to reclaim income tax you have already paid. At current tax rates this adds 24% to the amount you donate at no extra cost to yourself. There are other ways of reclaiming tax on larger one-off donations through 'Gift Aid' and also schemes such as 'Give As You Earn'. For details of these please contact the Bursar (currently Rev. Peter Bonati F.O.B.C) on (01434) 345204

The appeal is made under the auspices of Throssel Hole Priory. If for any reason we cannot develop the Northern Priory project further, any funds in the Northern Priory Fund would be applied for the purposes of the Throssel Hole Priory General Fund.

For further information about the Northern Priory Project please contact Iain Robinson, 7 Ballet Hill Crescent, Bilborrow, PRESTON, PR3 0RX. Telephone (01995) 640623

Registered Charity No. 506094

statements about the meaning of the Truth of Being. These statements are made with our minds looking at and describing the Truth of Being as an object. They are dependent on having a conceptualizing mind. Actualizing the Truth of understanding means *entering* the Truth of Being. There is no Truth of understanding when the Truth of Being is entered into. There is no personal meaning or any form of mind to be found when we are one with the Truth of Being. There is none needed. When the Truth of Being is entered into, we unite with it, and we and the Truth of Being vanish, no longer being seen as objects. Thus Actualization of the Truth is not something we understand in a conventional sense, but instead enter into and *become*. Our understanding of it may be true, but for the full unabstracted reality of it to be seen, for it to become the unimpeded Living Truth, we must go beyond our understanding of it and, like the king, actualize it in daily life. When we let go of our understanding we will not lose it. The letting go is what makes its appearance possible. As we live, it may rise and fall before us, but it doesn't matter. If we so choose, we can see it at any time. But we do so with the knowledge of what we do: the knowledge that Truth, as the world knows it, is not our True Home. Our True Home, which is without aspect and is everywhere, and to which we have returned, is the Truth of Being.

*

*

*

The Waves of Samsara

Rev. Saidō Kennaway, M.O.B.C.

*The following is an edited transcription of a talk given at a retreat
in July 1994*

During the next few days you will have a real opportunity to let go of some of the usual worries and be a bit more still. Part of this is to understand how the waves of samsara are created. At the back there we have a picture of Avalokiteshwara sitting on a rock next to a stormy looking sea. The stormy sea consists of the waves which we create ourselves. Early in life we are complete, we are whole. As a result of karmically acquired conditioning and the way that the world is, there arises a split. The heart becomes terrified and the brain takes over as a way of dealing with things. We chase after external objects and desires, to try and fill the emptiness we feel within. It is a bit like a wave, with the trough being this feeling of lack, this unease, not at peace, worried, feeling we are wanting something, that there must be more to life, and we want to fill this lack, want to do something about it.

What happens is that our senses—which are sometimes called the six thieves, because of their potential to steal our ability to look within—see external objects and want to grasp after them. This grasping is not just for objects but for all kinds of things. We try to fill this need from other people, from our status in society, from our work. There is nothing inherently wrong with any of this, the mistake is that we make them our refuge, so we are looking outside of ourselves to fill the gap. We see something, we look at it, we want it, we need it, we grasp after it. This is the beginning of a wave, it goes all the way up to the top, while we continue to grasp hold of it. It is then that we begin to come face to face with impermanence, because it begins to crumble in our hands, it is not what we expected, it has not satisfied the need. Then begins the drop, the depression, the feeling of “this is not it”, we



go down, and then we see something else, and go after that, we grasp at it. This trough and peak, trough and peak, form the waves of samsara, that we are tossed about on, and we ourselves are actually creating them. They are not something that is inherently there, it is we who are making this movement, this up and down, up and down, in an attempt to find the still place. We are trying to find something but are doing it in the wrong way, we are looking in the wrong direction. As a result we are creating more dissatisfaction.

Dōgen talks about impermanence in the Shushōgi:

It is very difficult to be born as a human being, and equally difficult to find Buddhism. However, because of the good karma we have accumulated, we have received the exceptional gift of a human body and are able to hear the teaching of Buddhism: we therefore have the greatest possibility of a full life within the limits of birth and death. It would be criminal to waste this opportunity by leaving this weak life of ours exposed to impermanence through lack of faith and commitment.

Impermanence offers no permanent succour. On what weeds by the roadside will the dew of our life fall? At this very minute this body is not my own. Life, which is controlled by time, never ceases even for an instance. Youth vanishes forever once it is gone: it is impossible to bring back the past when one suddenly comes face to face with impermanence, and it is impossible to look for assistance from kings, relatives, wives and children, let alone wealth and treasure.¹

You cannot escape from impermanence by any kind of external means. It is when we suddenly realize that we are older, that we can no longer do what we used to do, that we come face to face with this. Or when someone close to us dies, and we realize then that life is very short. When someone very young dies suddenly, has an accident on the road or something, then we realize in a real way that we have to do something about the state that we are in. Otherwise we are constantly tossed about by the waves and will never know real peace.

The way to start looking in the right direction is through learning again to be still. The Buddha in his early life was found meditating quite naturally at a annual ploughing festival. This was the festival when people celebrated the first sowing of the seeds. He was left alone by his nurses and was later found sitting in meditation under a roseapple tree. This simple meditation was what The Buddha practised just before His Enlightenment, when he realized that ascetic practises were getting him nowhere, he resorted to what he knew as a child. This form of meditation is something which is quite natural, which we would normally do, only we forget about it, and move away from our still place, up and down the crests of the waves. We can come back to this

still place and have the opportunity to be still without seeking for anything, without yearning for anything, just being totally involved in the practise of meditation. That is enough, just to be totally involved in it, without any kind of judgement, or wondering "was that it, did I do it right just then?", or trying to observe what you are doing. We just are still, completely.

Another way this whole process of being still and training can be seen, is by observing the ways in which we can leave that still place and go out through the gateways of sensations and mental activities. Through the sensations that arise we generate thoughts which lead us to act in ignorant and in foolish ways, and this has myriads of consequences. It creates the waves that bounce back at us and toss us around. So we have to find the backward flowing method², whereby the ignorance and foolishness are seen for what they are very clearly. These sensations are highlighted through being aware of the Precepts. If you read the Precepts day after day they will begin to sink in, and will then help to show us how to live from the Heart, what not to do, and also what it is good to do. The Three Pure Precepts show how to live from our True Nature, which is immaculate. Through taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha we can have true faith, and know that we can actually live in that way. One has to let go of all of the sensations, in the sense of really letting them go, so that when the feelings arise we do not let them run us about, do not let them catch us and throw us around. This is done by gently just letting them go, and being still.

Bodhidharma wrote:

If, however, you can focus your mind so that you illumine what is within, the constant light of your awareness and scrutiny will eradicate the three poisons and forever make them melt away and disappear, so that the six thieves will not invade you and create disturbance. Your numberless spiritual qualities, all manner of spiritual adornments, all untold Gates to the Dharma will all be naturally perfected through and through.³

It is very simple in the sense that we are not trying to find anything that is not already there. It is just that we are creating waves and clouding this by getting caught up in illusion. By just letting this stuff go, by closing the door to the six thieves, by guarding the door of the senses, and looking within, by turning the stream of compassion within, we do not allow them to cause disturbance. Do not let the thoughts, feelings and emotions cause disturbance, do not grow them in our own minds by allowing one worried thought to lead to the next worried thought to the next worried thought...ad infinitum. There comes a time for us all when we realize we are sitting there, thinking, worrying, and getting frustrated. This realization itself provides a gap in all of this, and you have to allow that gap to be there. Do not then go off on another tangent, "Oh, I should not be doing this, I should not be worrying, I am supposed to be meditating", wittering on like this. Just let it go ! When in meditation there is a small gap in these thoughts just let the gap be there. You do not have to do anything with it, just let it be there. We are creating this stuff, we are using the life of the Buddha to create disturbance, and it does not need to be there.

The "numberless spiritual qualities", the virtues, purity, grandeur, radiance, the Unborn, these are already what we truly are. It is already perfect, it is just that we have to practise, to develop and deepen the certainty of our true nature. Of our Buddha Nature. This is done through the Precepts and meditation. The Precepts highlight what not to do and how to do something about ourselves. The practise of meditation becomes like a diamond which constantly cuts away all attachments.

Notes

1. Great Master Dōgen, *Shushōgi*, in *Zen is Eternal Life*, Rōshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu Kennett (Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p.155.
2. See *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*, Rev. Master P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. (Shasta Abbey Press, 1993).
3. *Bodhidharma's Discourse on Pure Meditation in Buddhist Writings*, Rev. Hubert Nearman, O.B.C., translator, Rev. Master P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. and Rev. Dazui MacPhillamy, M.O.B.C. consultants and editors (Shasta Abbey Press, 1994), p. 381.

The Voice of Buddha

Rev. Alden Fulcher, F.O.B.C.

[This article is reprinted from the Summer 1994 issue of the Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. We are reprinting it here because the author, Rev. Alden, very kindly arranged to have a copy of the bell he describes in the article cast for Throssel Hole Priory. It now hangs in the ceremony hall. Rev. Alden is the Prior of Berkeley Buddhist Priory]

Recently, I had a new bronze bell cast for the Priory's Meditation Hall. My model was a bell belonging to Rev. Master which she kindly loaned to me for the creation of the mold. The features of the bell are rich with Buddhist symbolism and follow a traditional design found in Buddhist temple bells throughout China and Japan. For those like myself who are predominantly "visual thinkers," such symbols encode volumes of meaning. In the same way that certain passages of Teaching may effect us deeply, so too can religious art cut through our various mental discussions to strike the heart in a direct and non-verbal way.

Our bell is approximately seven inches in diameter by twelve inches high, weighs nine pounds and has a beautiful, dark patina. It is hung from a large hardwood bracket by twin dragon heads forming a loop at its top. For me, the position of this symbol on the bell is very interesting. On one level, the dragon symbolizes the Eternal, which is our fundamental refuge. Alternately, dragons may represent those who defend the faith or guard the Teaching. Just as the bell's entire weight is suspended by the loop, so does our training rest on our willingness of faith.

The rows of small studs that circumvent the upper half of the bell signify the defilements (or karma) which are converted through religious practice. Like the exquisite sound of the bell, the conversion of our own ignorance, craving and fear become the very means by

which we may know and express the Eternal—the voice of Buddha. Another explanation for these studs is that they mirror the stylized snail shells found on the heads of Buddha statues. In the East, entire scriptures are inscribed on the inner and outer surfaces of large temple bells. In this way, the scriptures are “recited” each time the bell is struck, stirring the hearts of all who are able to hear the Truth.

The Priory’s bell is rung at festival and memorial ceremonies during the celebrant’s procession into the Ceremony Hall. It is struck with a mallet by a lay trainee against one of two raised surfaces. Each surface has the shape of a lotus blossom with a Dharmachakra (eight-spoked wheel, representing the Noble Eightfold Path) at its center. As we make a daily effort (the striking of the mallet) to apply the Teaching (the eight-spoked wheel) our faith and understanding of the Truth of Buddhism unfolds in a clear and natural way (the lotus blossom.) All come together within the present moment. This means that in order to know Buddha, we must act like Buddha for, in reality, training and enlightenment are one.

A number of parallel lines run across the outer surface of the bell, originating around the area of the lotus blossom. These are like the veins of our bodies through which the Precepts, or life-blood of Buddhist training, flows. One of the ancestors in our line of Transmission, Great Master Manzan Dohaku, taught that the Precepts should not be viewed as a means for getting rid of karma, but as Buddhahood itself. As Great Master Dōgen says, “If the will to train and the Way of the Buddhas are not harmonised, neither body nor mind will know peace.”¹ This is because the thoughts, speech and actions of sentient beings, however distorted they may appear to be as a result of karmic conditioning, have as their basis a pure longing—to be One with the Eternal. Until we know this, there is only endless suffering. In making the Precepts our “blood and bones” we can see with the eyes of Shakyamuni Buddha and hear with the ears of the Ancestors, for then the heart of our True Being and the Buddhas are one and the same.

For a moment, the loveliness of the bell's voice is heard,
Then fades and returns to silence.
We, too, resonate for but a moment.
May all beings hear the Truth of these words,
And awaken a longing for the Unborn.²

*

Notes

1. Great Master Dōgen, *Gyakudō-yōjinshu* (Aspects of Zazen) in *Zen is Eternal Life*, 3rd ed. rev., by Rōshi P.T.N.H. Ji-yu-Kennett (Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 129.
2. Dedication spoken by Rev. Alden during the ceremony of the blessing and installation of the Priory's new bell.

*

*

*

Working with Computer Frustration

Rev. Berwyn Watson

I work a lot with computers, and I have often found myself blaming them for the frustration that can arise when I work with them. This sometimes takes the form of imagining that computers are in themselves 'bad' for my training and then fantasizing about the possibility of doing some real 'Zen training' in the garden, kitchen, or just anywhere where I don't have to face a V.D.U. Fortunately perhaps, escape has not been so easy, and the following is the result of having to work through some of the frustration and learn from it.

What seems to happen is that when you start working with computers you are still holding onto the fantasy that they give you some kind of extra power: literally the ability to zap things! This is how computers are sold to the public. How many adverts stress power? There are even models of computers called "the Power...", this or "the Power...", that. It is not surprising that we take the bait and believe it. The initial stage is a "power trip", you are fascinated by what it can do, you are sucked in and revel in it. What follows is a drop, you discover it won't actually do exactly what you want it to do. There is then acute frustration as there is no way of reasoning with the machine or persuading it to do something in a slightly different way. It is easy at this stage to blame the computer for your frustration or for how you feel about life in general.

I think that in terms of the six realms of existence on the Wheel of Life, this is closest to the realm of the Asuras, or the ambitious gods who are storming heaven. Sometimes it seems like you have made it to 'heaven', the last bug in the software has been sorted out, it will do exactly what you want and you can sit back and let it do all the work for you. Then comes another variable, a slight variation in the database report that ruins the whole program, a change in layout that sends the printer haywire, and you're no longer in control. Because you have

identified yourself with the computer it is not easy to see that the cause of frustration is always ambition. It seems like it is caused by an external 'thing'. Fighting with this external thing never works. The more you wrestle with the apparently unsolvable "technical difficulty", the worse it can often get. The problem becomes so big you can't see any way out of it and there is no longer the flexibility to stand back and view it from a fresh perspective. The computer is acting like a mirror reflecting back your own grasping for power and the frustration that results from this. The computer does not change, so how can it be the most wonderful invention ever one day, and the next day become something that makes your life a misery?

I have found it helpful to write myself something a bit like Great Master Dōgen's *Instruction to the Chief Cook*, but for the computer operator instead. We cannot hold the raw materials of food responsible for the end-product we serve up, nor can the computer ever be blamed for anything. Neither should we discriminate between what the computer magazines would say was an "obsolete" machine and the latest, fastest, "state of the art" computer. (If you allow computers to draw you into the Asura realm, then the computer magazine becomes your favourite reading!) The mind that Dōgen seems to be cultivating in his *Instructions to the Chief Cook* is one of gratitude, care and flexibility. The fact that Apple Macs and PCs didn't exist in 13th century Japan doesn't mean we can't endeavour to put these ideals into practise. To see computers as somehow being in a different realm from food and then to approach them in a demanding way is to already view things from the discriminatory mind. Also, just because something is new, and "state of the art" doesn't mean that we should have unreasonable expectations of it. A computer is an offering, like anything else, and is the result of a vast amount of work, by many different people. We should also recognize that they save a lot of time and effort (on tasks that can be very tedious) that can then be usefully employed elsewhere.

The point is that we don't need to adopt a rather holy attitude to the computer that blames high-tec and the "pace of modern life" for the feelings of frustration that arise, neither do we need to expect computers to solve problems for us. I remember asking at a spiritual direction ceremony once, "how should I view my mistakes in training?", and I was told not to "view" them at all. If we look with the judgemental mind we will always find mistakes, problems and inadequacies. If you let this "viewing" go, the computer can be your teacher. It is a very patient teacher and never reacts, however frustrated you may get.

* * *

Reflections on the Ninety-Day Retreat 1996

A Personal Recollection of the Ninety-Day Retreat

Cliff Edwards

I am aware that anything I write can only touch my experience of the Ninety-Day Retreat. Had I not lived the experience, I would view with incredulity the idea of willingly putting myself through what, at times, seemed like hell.

Nor would I have believed that I would find the faith and trust that sustained me through extremes of joy and despair and times of spiritual bleakness.

Twelve people came to live and train together for three months, spending much of the time in cramped conditions, with no structure, no rules, no seniority. Twelve egos in constant collision, struggling for assertion, driven by fear of annihilation to cling desperately to a sense of "I" and "mine".

Guidance from Rev. Master early in the retreat was invaluable:

You will have to give. You will have to make the offering. Why does it have to be you? Because you are the only one who can.

From the start the pressure was intense with nowhere to hide. Fear, anger, hatred even arose as each reacted to stress in their own way. The first few weeks were lived in a state of shock, confusion and disconnectedness. In moments of stillness I could look outside my own selfish needs and see those same feelings reflected in the faces of others. Compassion wells up but still the selfish "self" fights to assert itself.

Change came quietly. No sudden awareness of old attitudes, habits, "self" dropping away but that they had slipped away, quietly and unnoticed. With change came a deepening of faith and an understanding

that life was never going to be the same again. With recognition of change came a profound sense of loss, of bereavement and floods of emotion. It was a time to grieve, to mourn the passing of the "old self", the refuge I had invested in so heavily for all those years. Then it was time to be still, to just let things be.

But in that stillness arose fear, an intense fear, a fear that was with me day and night, lurking behind me. As I sat with the fear, I could feel my energy, my will, draining away and I knew that I had to confront this or be forever driven by it. Summoning all my will, I dragged the fear from its driving place behind me to a place over the third eye where I could hold and confront it.

The fear, when confronted, dissipates. A week had passed since its emergence and the experience left me exhausted. Within the security of the monastery, with the support of the retreat group and with guidance from Rev. Master, I had found strength to face this deep karma. I can only express my gratitude by offering my daily training.

The words on the stone by the monastery gate take a deeper meaning: "Peace to the one who leaps beyond all fear". Leap for me. Just one small step.

Within this dark period there was light. As I put my question to Rev. Master at a Dharma interview, I looked up and saw the shining golden statue of Manjusri. The Truth was there for me to see. For a fraction of a second the door of heaven opened.

Imperceptibly, demands of lay life intruded as the retreat drew to a close. It became vital to just take each day as it came. The last day of the retreat, the first day back to lay life would be just another day. After we had made our emotional farewells, it was still just another day. Just the next step to take, just to keep going.

"O Buddha, going, going, going on beyond and always going on beyond, always becoming Buddha, hail, hail, hail."

*

Poems From a Buddhist Monastery

Wendy LaChance

*"Blessed be the Buddha who knows the merit and virtue of
wandering in training one step at a time."*

FROM THE LOTUS CEREMONY

LAUGHTER

*"We offer this water to the hungry ghosts
so that they too may be filled."*

FROM THE MEALTIME CEREMONY

They say I started it.

The laughter.

In silence, I pour communal water into my cup
and a portion of that onto my plate and clean, clean.

Then to bowl and again
fresh water from my cup to plate

(I get a rinse this way).

I am so immersed in this washing up
my sponge whistles, I hum

as I move the water from cup to plate to bowl.

A giggle wells up in me, erupts in me.

I rock back and forth,

hide my face, try to contain this laughter

that will have its own living life,

that races along the table after gravity

like a child's glass of spilled milk.

I will do penance. I will.

For offering with my water—laughter

life, a bubbling over so hungry ghosts too

may be filled.

THE TELLING

How do I speak of it?
These days reverberate through
the place I cannot see.
Sometimes I am empty without an echo;
sometimes I am filled with sound.
I live between beats.
Who speaks?
I hold onto words as if they hold the answer.
Words form fissures, split me open,
leave me by myself.
Space lives within this space.
An unutterableness.
Now, I am silent.
Can you hear me?

*

*

*

News

Monastic News: On the 5th of April Rev. Raymond and Rev. Olwen returned from Shasta Abbey after a six-month stay. During their stay Rev. Raymond helped in the kitchen and Rev. Olwen helped Rev. Ekō with administration. Their return necessitated the construction of a meditation platform to provide enough meditation places for all the monks. In the future we plan to create more room in the meditation hall by using the space currently taken up by the library. We were also very glad to see Rev. Chūshin who came over from Shasta Abbey in May and stayed at the Priory for a week during a visit to the U.K. to see relatives.

We congratulate Rev. Alicia on the successful completion of her term as Head Novice. This culminated in her Head Novice's Dharma Ceremony on the 18th of April. She chose to be examined on a section of Kanshi Sōsan's poem, *That Which is Engraved Upon the Heart That Trusts to the Eternal*:

There is no need to hunt for Truth,
 simply stop exhaling personal opinions;
Cease your abiding in dualistic views
 and take care not to chase after them
 or seek them out
For as soon as 'right' and 'wrong' arise,
 confusion sets in and your thoughts will go awry.

In the last week of April we held a week-long monks' retreat (sesshin) at the Priory. For this retreat we adopted a flexible schedule that allowed everyone to benefit from this opportunity to reflect within.

On the 7th of May, two workers from the 'Drilcorp' company arrived together with a mobile drilling rig to begin drilling a well on the Priory grounds. We will be providing a full report on the progress of the well in the next issue, but it is already clear that the well should provide us with sufficient water for our projected needs. Our thanks to Tim Westmoreland for giving us his professional advice during this project.

We were delighted to receive a second visit from Venerable Ringu Tulku, a Tibetan teacher associated with Samye Ling, on the 22nd of May. We would like to express our appreciation of the Dharma talk he gave to the monks on *The Sutra on the Essence of Transcendent Knowledge* (a translation from the Tibetan of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*). In his talk he sketched in some of the background to the Mahayana Sutras on the Perfection of Wisdom, then carefully elucidated the meaning of “Śūnyatā” before going through the Scripture in detail. His lively and informed talk was followed by an opportunity to ask questions and exchange comments on more general topics.

On the 4th of June Sister Edith Margaret, an Anglican nun from All Hallows Convent in Ditchingham Norfolk, arrived to stay with us for five days and participated in the monastic schedule during her visit.

Alan Clarke from Lancaster entered the monastery as a postulant on the 14th June. We wish him all the best in his future training.

On the 15th June Sister Sanghamittā, a Swiss Theravadin nun, came to visit for a few days. She had been training at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, and was on her way back to Thailand, where she had been trained as a nun before coming to England. During her stay with us she kindly presented us with leaves from the Bodhi Tree which grows in the Jeta Grove in Savathi, India, one of the Buddhist holy places where Lord Buddha taught for many years. Sister Sanghamittā also brought back earth from the Jeta Grove in a little stupa for us. We are very grateful to her for these presents.

Rev. Hector who has been staying with us for just under a year left on the 5th of July to return to North Cascades Priory where he will be chaplain to Rev. Koshin and an extern-sacristy assistant. Our thanks to Rev. Hector for sharing his training with us. We wish him well for the future.

The Keeping of the Ten Precepts Meeting: We offer our congratulations to the people who took Lay Ordination this year: Judith Brackman-Sharp, Faith Broadbent, Kevin Commons, Lucy Crowden, Christine Derham, Atze Dijkstra, Tom Falcon, Ronnie Fleming, Jeremy

Haslam, Kay Hinett, Jane Hopwood, Nanette Idzerda, Beela Jalie, Deborah Khudabux, Vanessa Lockwood, Chris Loukes, Bill Lowe, David Lowe, Stephen Makin, Ingeborg Meulendijks, Tony Owers, Peter Richards, Chris Richardson, Trevor Silvester, Ann Surgey, Dave Webb, Christine Yeomans.

The *Ten Precepts Meeting* is the retreat when we formally celebrate the wish of all present to keep the Precepts. The pattern of the ceremonies during the week follows the path of training. First we hear that training is possible, the *Reading of the Ten Precepts*. We acknowledge our wish to train, the *Ceremony of Lay Ordination*. We are willing to look at our past mistakes and learn from them, the *Ceremony of Contrition and Conversion*. We are willing to follow the teaching, the *Ceremony of Following Where the Precepts Lead* and through all this we learn to trust our True Heart, *Recognition*.

This was our first large retreat using our new kitchen. As we were able to rent Woodbine Cottage, the house opposite our entrance, until the end of the retreat, some of the retreatants had their meals there. This eased the usual problem of having to have our meals in two sittings.

Family Weekend: This year nineteen children and eighteen adults visited the Priory for our Family Weekend. As the event was so well attended two Youth Hostels were used instead of one for overnight accommodation. As the children grow and change we find the atmosphere of the weekend does too. Most of the children can only visit once a year and it is a joy to see the junior Sangha making friends and taking care of each other. We celebrated the *Festival of the Buddha's Birth* (Wesak) on the Sunday of the weekend and many more friends joined us for this Festival. After the children had received their Wesak gift we all rang the Temple bell. Wesak is regarded as not only the Birth of Shakyamuni Buddha but also the Buddhist New Year. We ring the bell with our New Years' resolutions in mind. The sound of the bell stands for the many delusions in life that we can transform through training into the gates to Enlightenment. This was the first Wesak that

we used our new bell. Rev. Alden, Prior of Berkeley Priory, very kindly arranged to have this bell cast for us and it now hangs in our ceremony hall. After the Festival, Rev. Saidō gave a Dharma talk in the ceremony hall.

Memorials: On the 4th of May a memorial for Kiyoko Sugita was held at the Priory with Rev. Fuden as the celebrant. Mrs Konishi came with her husband all the way from Japan to hold the memorial on the anniversary of her mother's death six years ago.

On the 7th of June a memorial was held for Mrs Florence Butcher, who was a next door neighbour to Reading Buddhist Priory, with Rev. Mildred as celebrant. A memorial and burial of ashes ceremony was held for Peter Harvey on the 8th of June and on the 11th of June a memorial was held for Sigrid Schjøtt, Rev. Aylwin's grandmother.

On the 30th of June we held a memorial for Loret Kowkee Lee. Mr Lee was called the "dragon master" by colleagues after his death as he organized the dragon dancing which is part of the traditional Chinese New Year's celebrations in Manchester. Family, friends and colleagues came from Manchester in two coaches to pay their respects and show their gratitude for his generosity. After the memorial, the community was presented with the gift of a Buddha statue and a generous cash donation from Mr Lee's family and friends.

Wedding: On the 25 of May, Rev. Daishin was the celebrant at the wedding of Caroline Beech and David Brazier. We offer Caroline and David our congratulations and wish them well in their life together. During the wedding ceremony which is the offering of the marriage for the good of all beings, the bride and groom take the Three Refuges. The marriage contract reads,

We are now being given the Light of the Lord so that we will extinguish the light of selfishness. We will make the Lord's Light sanctify our marriage and we will be converted deeply to the Three Treasures. From now on we will purify our bodies and minds so that we will make no mistakes in human morals and so as to help each other to be successful each in our own way. Our every action shall

increase our respect for life so that the merits of our relationship shall glorify all living things.

Animal Funerals: Our tomcat Charlie went missing for a week and was found dead on April 11th, he'd been hit by a car and had obviously been killed instantly. Rev. Myōhō, who had looked after him during his four and a half years with us was the celebrant at his funeral. He was given the name "Charlie, Finder of Peace" and buried in our animal cemetery. On the 21st of April we held a funeral ceremony for Suki, Dave and Zoe Hurcombe's cat. On the 12th of May a funeral was held for Sapphire, the Richards' family dog.

Outside Events: In the last few months we have given an introductory day retreat at Hull, as well as half-day retreats in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. On the 18th of May Revs. Fuden and Roland lead a half-day retreat at Leicester with the help of the newly-affiliated Leicester Group. The retreat was held on the premises of the East Midlands Buddhist Vihara courtesy of the resident Theravadin Bikkhus. The retreat was attended by Venerable Ananda, a senior Sri-Lankan monk from the Vihara, who is also a regular attender of the Leicester Group meetings. On the following day Revs. Fuden and Roland were invited to attend the Wesak celebrations organised by the East Midlands Buddhist Association. The event was held in a Leicester Scout group hall large enough for the one-hundred and fifty guests, mainly Sri-Lankan Buddhists—adults and children, and had an atmosphere similar to one of our congregation days. Dharma talks were given by Ven. Pandit M. Vajiragnana, Chief Sangha Nayaka of Great Britain and head of the London Buddhist Vihara, Ven. Pandit K.U. Jinaratana, spiritual director of the East Midlands Vihara, and Rev. Fuden. Everyone present then took part in the traditional lighting of oil lamps and the offering of flowers, lanterns and incense to a beautiful new golden Buddha statue. This was followed by a 'dana' meal offering. The celebration ended with the Bikkhus' 'Pirit' chant, a traditional Sri-Lankan ceremonial recital of Scriptures which ensures protection and general success. Revs. Fuden and Roland were delighted to be invited

and we hope to continue our fruitful relations with the Sri-Lankan Sangha.

Dutch News: On the weekend of the 4th-5th of May the Dutch Sangha came together to meditate and celebrate Wesak. Wesak was a true "Festival of Flowers" as the apple trees and cherry trees in the garden outside the meditation hall were all in full flower. (In Japan Wesak is called Hanamatsuri or "The Festival of Flowers" because it coincides with the blooming of many trees in springtime).

Several introductory days were held also held in May: at The Hague, Maastricht and in Centrum Vuurvlinder. Many retreatants expressed interest in follow up retreats and several hoped to visit Throssel Hole Buddhist Priory in the summer. Several people decided to get together for meditation on a regular basis. During her visit to the Netherlands Rev. Hakuun also introduced twenty pupils of the Vrije School in Zeist to our meditation practice. Further retreats will take place in September and October 1996.

Schools: May was a busy month for visits to schools by monks and we also received two visits from school parties to the Priory. This is part of our continuing commitment to support the teaching of Buddhism in schools as part of the national curriculum.

Animal News: We are pleased to welcome two new animal members to our community. Rev. Daishin now has a new dog, a very energetic young male of varied ancestry, called Ned. We also have a young tom cat called Harry. Both Ned and Harry came from the Newcastle Upon Tyne Dog and Cat Shelter and Animal Sanctuary and are adjusting to the rigours of monastic life.

Trees: During the *Ten Precepts Meeting* lay trainees helped with the first stage of planting a thousand Scots Pine trees. The hard work of making slits in the sod for the tree slips was completed during the retreat. We now have a small woodland of tree guards in the top Myrtle Bank field to show for all the work. We have finished our spring planting season and plan to plant six hundred Birch in the Autumn.

Building News: As reported in the spring issue of the Journal we have contracted out some of the internal building work in the upstairs of the Hall of Pure Offerings to a local building company. The builders did their work in two stages. They first put up a wooden framework and some of the ceiling plasterboard, they then allowed some time for monks to put electric cables and fittings in place, returning in July to put up the remaining plasterboard. For the next stage the extern-sacristy monks will be plastering the upstairs rooms. This will be followed by the plumbing and decorating work and then the fitting of doors, skirting boards and lights.

The extern-sacristy have taken a month to do essential maintenance whilst the building company has been at work, such as buttressing a retaining wall behind the meditation hall and window maintenance.

In Gratitude

Our thanks to those trainees who donated their time and expertise to help us with various projects and equipment maintenance in the last few months. Margaret Knight helped to strengthen the banner used in the Recognition Ceremony at the end of the *Ten Precepts Meeting* and we have also had two cassette players repaired recently. We have had many donations of very useful items in the last few months, the following list is by no means exhaustive: a toolbox and two computer fans, a comfy chair and vacuum cleaner, vacuum cleaner parts, a calendar, a kitchen mixer, three books on construction techniques, a toaster, earthenware pottery, discs for Amstrad computers, two 'Vaporetta' ironing systems, many plants, (including spiraeas, ferns, aquilegeas, runner-beans, sweet peas, mesembreanthums, poppies and Shasta daisies) a dog bed, two boxes of books for children and young people on the Life of the Buddha and Jatakata Tales from the East Midlands Buddhist Vihara, electric kettles, a car tarpaulin, food, soap and shampoos from the Forest Hermitage, a standard lamp, an overhead projector, and a 1929 limited edition of *The Light of Asia*.

Our thanks for the donations of soysauce, cakes, biscuits, oil, canned vegetables, pasta, tea, vermicelli, dried vegetables, cheese, teabags and nuts to the kitchen in the last few months. The kitchen was also very grateful for the many donations of bread, fruit and other items that we received from those who came to the *Ten Precepts Meeting*. We were also delighted to receive a donation of 72 kilos (288 punnetts) of strawberries from William Hardy vegetable wholesalers (our regular vegetable supplier) at the end of June.

Through the instigation of Mo Henderson, other Lay Ministers and the support of many members of the congregation, a month-long quiet retreat and renewal was offered for two senior monks in Brittany this year. A peaceful and restful stay was enjoyed by the monks and the community would like to thank all who helped support this offering. We would especially like to thank Mo Henderson and her husband Peter and son Carl, who made the cottage accommodation available and who open-heartedly made the monks feel so welcome and were generous in so many ways. Thanks also to Brian Thompson who offered help with the organisation and transport.

Introduction to the Tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation booklets

We would like thank those who donated money towards the cost of producing the booklet *An Introduction to the Tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation*. This enables us to distribute it free of charge to those who would like copies. If anyone is interested in donating money towards the continuing cost of producing them please contact the guest department. If you wish to dedicate your contribution to the memory of someone, we will acknowledge this in the booklet.

In Gasshō

Alms Bowl

The kitchen would very much appreciate some high stools (height about 28") for people to use when preparing food. Some large robust kitchen scales that can comfortably weigh up to 10 kilograms would also be very useful. We are also looking for some large thermos flasks. If anyone has a paraffin heater specifically for heating greenhouses that they no longer need, we would be grateful for any offers.

We would still be grateful for offers of a secondhand wordprocessor/computer (preferably with a printer). Something that could handle letters and short documents would be fine.

Guest Department Announcements

The Introductory Retreat for the 9th to the 11th of August has been cancelled.

The Bodhidharma Festival this year has been rescheduled from the 8th September to the 18th of August, to coincide with the end of the second summer Sesshin.

Reading Buddhist Priory News

We would like to thank Rev. Adelin for all the work she has put into the Reading Priory during her nine months as Prior and for sharing her training with the southern congregation.

On May the 8th Rev. Raymond came down from Throssel to take over as Prior. Four days later, we celebrated the Festival of the Buddha's Birth at nearby Leighton Park School in Reading. Sixty people including eight children, attended what proved to be a very enjoyable day. All agreed that the new venue was excellent for the event and we have booked it again on Sunday May the 11th 1997 for next year's festival. Our thanks goes to Andrew and Julie Taylor-Browne for organizing the day and to all those who helped in any way. The next day Rev. Adelin left for Throssel Hole Priory.

We are pleased to announce that the builders were able to start work on the final stage of the Priory's extension (the internal work) on June 3rd. They will be doing all the interior work up to, but not including, the decorating. They hope to be finished sometime around the middle of July, after which we will be able to decorate, carpet and generally fit out the new rooms. We also intend to redecorate many of the existing rooms as the change around occurs. Any help with the decoration and fitting out of the rooms would be much appreciated. We hope to have all the rooms fully operational by the end of August.

The Priory has had several visits from various types of students who needed to learn about Buddhism for their respective courses: four visits from R.E. students from colleges, one visit from a school, two from a nursing college and one from nursery nurse students.

Outside Events: The beautiful old buildings and grounds of Charney Manor provided an ideal, peaceful setting again this year for a weekend retreat, 12-14th January. Eleven people joined the retreat with Rev. Adelin. Thank you to Gill Hague and Irene Mueller-Harvey for organising the weekend. For 1997 we have booked the weekend 7th-9th February for a retreat at Springhead.

On June the 5th, Rev. Raymond was the celebrant for the funeral ceremonies of Vi Tam Chi in Deptford, East London. Revs. Olwen and Favian came down from Throssel to assist with the ceremonies. After a short ceremony outside the family's home, the funeral ceremony took place in a funeral parlour in Deptford with the close relatives present. Around one hundred and fifty of the family then gathered at Grove Park cemetery for the burial.

The Prior has continued to regularly visit the meditation groups in the south. On the 12th June, Rev. Raymond went to Leighton Park School to answer questions from a group of year 11 pupils.

On the weekend of June 14th-16th, a weekend retreat was held at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire. Nineteen lay trainees attended; Rev. Saidō came down from Throssel to lead the retreat with Rev. Raymond assisting. Our thanks and sympathies to George and Joyce

Norwell who did all the pre-retreat organisation and then were ill over the weekend and unable to attend. Thanks to Mark Boyne, Jan Johnston and Eric Jones for stepping in and ensuring the retreat went smoothly.

In Gratitude

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so generously to the upkeep of the Priory over the past months, and for all the various ways in which people have given their time and skills. Thank you for all the financial support; all the many food and household items donated; for disposable lighters, a cover for the Great Monks' Offertory plate, incense and an incense burner, a meditation gong, a cushion for our large meditation gong, a set of kitchen taps, bowls, office supplies, candles, a Tibetan thangka (an Avalokiteshwara) and an Avalokiteshwara statue for the front garden.

Alms Bowl

Once the new meditation hall is completed we will need some more meditation mats (zabutons) and chairs. If you are able to help with making mats, perhaps as a group undertaking, please contact the Priory and we will provide sewing instructions.

Subscription Form

If you would like to subscribe to the Journal please use this form. Subscriptions to the Journal also help to support the Priory, and thus foster the growth of Sōtō Zen Buddhism. Please address your envelope to *The Journal* and make your cheque payable to *Throssel Hole Priory*.

We regret we are unable to take subscriptions for more than two years at one time. Please indicate in writing if any part of the amount you are sending is a general donation to the Priory.

One years subscription costs:

U.K only : £8.00

Foreign Rates (in Sterling):

Surface mail (to anywhere in the world) £8.50

Airmail to E.E.C. countries (incl. Republic of Ireland)

£9.50

Airmail to non. E.E.C. countries

£10.00

I enclose.....

for..... years subscription (max 2 yrs)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Please tick this box if you do not wish to be

on the Priories computer mailing list.

☐

Throssel Hole Priory Affiliated Groups (U.K.)

Aberdeen Group:

tel. (01330) 824339

meetings: Mondays 7.30pm.

Birmingham Group:

tel. (01384) 280084

Bristol Group:

tel. (01291) 650581

Cambridge Group:

tel. (01223) 411018

meetings: once a month on
Tuesdays 7.30pm.

Cardiff Group:

tel. (01222) 890034

meetings: Thursdays 7.30pm.

Chichester Group:

tel. (01243) 551315

meetings: Thursdays 8pm.

Edinburgh Group:

tel. (0131) 662 1865

or (0131) 228 2506

meetings: Mon. & Fri. 7.30pm;
Weds. 7am.

Exeter Group:

tel. (01363) 777922

meetings: twice a month, Thursdays
7.30pm

Harrogate Group:

tel. (01423) 885490

meetings: Tuesday evenings

Huddersfield Group:

tel. (01484) 852749

or (01484) 681300

meetings: Thursdays 7.30pm.

Lancaster Group:

tel. (01524) 34031

or (01524) 63503

meetings: Monday evenings.

Leicester Group

tel. (0116) 288 6978

meetings: alternate Friday evenings

Liverpool Group:

tel. (0151) 724 3030

meetings: Thursdays 7.30pm.

London Group:

tel. (0171) 431 6734

meetings: Tuesdays 7.30pm.

Manchester Group:

tel. (0161) 797 0251

meetings: Monday evenings.

Milton Keynes Group:

tel. (01280) 813962

meetings: Tuesdays 8pm.

Newcastle Group:

tel. (0191) 265 1404

meetings: Thursday evenings.

Norwich Group:

tel. (01603) 502876

meetings: Wednesday evenings.

Nottingham Group:

tel. (0115) 960 3450

meetings: Wednesdays 7.30 pm.

Preston Group:

tel. (01995) 640623

or (01772) 634790

meetings: every Friday 7.30pm.

Sheffield Group:

tel. (0114) 265 7229

meetings: Thursdays 7pm.

Telford Group:

tel. (01952) 825780

meetings: Wednesday evening.

Reading Buddhist Priory

176 Cressingham Road

READING

RG2 7LW

Tel (01734) 860750

Throssel Hole Priory
Buddhist Monastery
Carrshield
HEXHAM
Northumberland
NE47 8AL